



## Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)

# Southern Indiana Young Forest Initiative

Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)



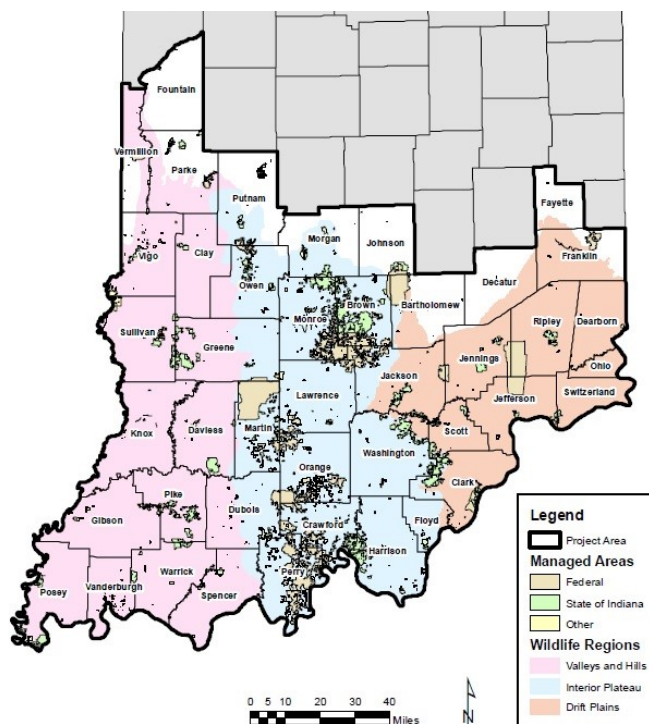
"The Southern Indiana Young Forest Initiative is a five-year project covering 43 of the state's southern counties. The project's goal is to improve the population recoveries of young forest bird species such as ruffed grouse, American woodcock, blue-winged warbler, yellow-breasted chat, and whip-poor-will," said Indiana Department of Natural Resources State Forester John Seifert. "This area of focus is based on the Central Hardwoods Joint Venture bird conservation region and shows a dramatic lack of early successional habitat."

In recent years, Indiana along with many other states has experienced a decline in these bird populations. The reduction in populations is associated with a decline of young forest, a crucial habitat type. The term "young forest" is used to describe ecosystems densely occupied with seedlings, saplings, shrubs, and other early-successional plants. According to IDNR's Continuous Forest Inventory Report dated 2012-2016, there is a significant lack of this critical young forest component throughout much of the state.

Through the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), funding is available to private forest owners and operators for forest stewardship planning and for implementing practices that restore young forest habitat. IDNR District Foresters will work with NRCS and other conservation partners to provide assistance to producers to plan and carry out conservation practices through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). (2)

Contact your Indiana DNR District Forester at <https://www.in.gov/dnr/forestry/4750.htm> or your local NRCS Service Station at <https://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app> for more information.

## Project Boundaries



## Temporary Forest Openings , patch clearcuts (1/4 to 10 acres)

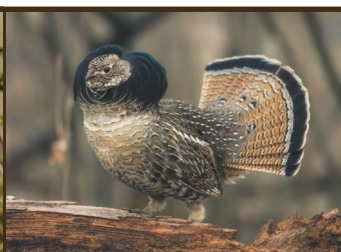
**Payment Rate for FY2020 \$278.72 /acre**

Additional Practices also include: Forest Stand Improvement, Light (666), Brush Management (314), Conservation Cover (327), Early Successional habitat Development/Management (647), Firebreak (394), Forest Trails and Landing (655), Herbaceous Weed Treatment (315), Prescribed Burning (338), Structures for Wildlife (649), Tree and Shrub Establishment (612), Upland Wildlife Habitat Management (645)





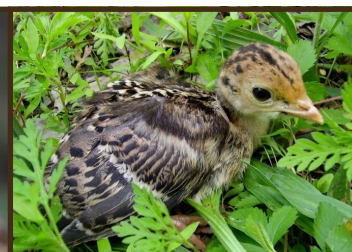
Yellow Breasted Chat—JD Mays



Ruffed Grouse—Steve Oehlenschlaeger



Bobcat—Gary Kramer USFWS



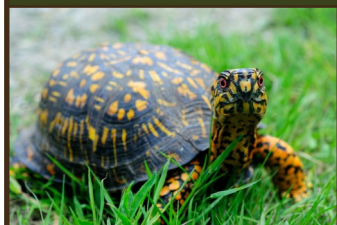
Eastern Wild Turkey— NWTf



Black and White Warbler —JD Mays



Eastern Towhee— Bill Thompson USFW



Eastern Box Turtle— JD Mays

## Why are Young Forests Important?

Each stage of a forest, or “age class” as foresters say, provides critical habitat for wildlife. Young forests have more seeds, berries, and beneficial insects sought by breeding, migrating, and over-wintering animals. <sup>(1)</sup> They provide cover against predators, vegetative structure for nesting, and escape cover for young wildlife species. Even species associated with older forests also seek out patches of young forest to access seasonal food and cover. <sup>(1)</sup>

Nearly 60 percent of forestland in our region is 40 to 80 years old, but only 8 percent of forestland is 20 years or younger.

Young forests are needed as habitat for dozens of wildlife species and to reverse the ongoing shift in forest composition from oak to [beech-] maple. Forest management, including prescribed fire and regeneration harvests, is critical for reliable creation of young forest, promotion of biodiversity, and the future health of Indiana forests. <sup>(3)</sup>



American Woodcock— Charles Fergus



Indigo Bunting— Tom Berriman



Rose-Breasted Grosbeak— Tom Berriman

### References

1. Costanza, Bridgett Estel, NRCS Working Lands for Wildlife East Coordinator, “Forests Through the Ages: the Importance of Young Forest”, July 1, 2016, <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/blogdetail/nrcsblog/home/?cid=NRCSEPRD1179414>
2. Indiana NRCS, “Funding Available through the Southern Indiana Young Forest Initiative Project”, Press Release, November 28, 2017, <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/in/newsroom/releases/NRCSEPRD1368812/>
3. Islam, Kamal et al. Editorial, “Young Forests for Future Hoosiers”, Journal and Courier, October 13, 2017, <https://youngforest.org/news/young-forests-future-hoosiers>

**Project Initiation Year: 2017 Project Lifespan: 5 Years Funding: \$960,000**

The initiative is being funded by the USDA's Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Regional Conservation Partnership Program. Other partners include:



Indiana Forestry Educational Foundation



Central Hardwoods  
Joint Venture  
partnerships for conservation



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